



# HOW TO RUN A TEAM MEETING

# INTRODUCTION

Leading a team meeting gives you the opportunity to pull together the individual members of the team and create an environment that fosters teamwork. To ensure a team meeting goes well requires a little planning and some good facilitation skills. To get the most out of everyone is the goal of every manager and this applies just as much to team meetings.

Think about your own perception of team meetings and what you consider their purpose to be. There are many who perceive that most meetings are a waste of time - too many meetings that don't appear to have a purpose. This can create meeting disengagement. It is important therefore that if you are going to lead a meeting that it delivers beyond expectation!

# WHAT CAN LEAD TO MEETINGS FALLING?

Before we create a model for success it can be useful to think about what causes failure – especially as so many meetings fail.

## What do you think can lead to a meeting failing?

Ideas might include:

- Too many meetings can dilute the importance
- Nothings gets decided, just debated
- No agenda
- Drift off point and turns into something else
- Too long
- No focus
- Dominated by one person
- Too much waffle and no real point to some peoples contribution
- Decisions made before the meeting
- No one listens and everyone wants to talk
- No minutes to follow up on content
- No one takes responsibility for outputs
- Start late and finish late

# KEY STEPS TO ENSURE SUCCESS

This eight point plan will help ensure that the meetings you run are as effective as possible.

Clearly the content still needs to be in line with the team's needs and relevant to the attendees for it to be deemed successful by the participants.

## **Start on Time**

This starts with you being ready and the room available. How meetings have started late because the meeting organizer was late? Make sure you have a room booked and it is ready to use. Avoid waiting for the meeting to start due to late arrivals. Start on time rather than make those who arrive on time wait for the late.

## **Stick to the Agenda**

This means you need an agenda in the first place. Sharing the agenda before the meeting gives everyone time to prepare and consider what they want to achieve and what they could contribute of value. Give timings for discussion of each subject to help ensure you finish on time and that one subject does not eat into the entire meeting.

## **Keep on Track**

If subjects lead to additional subjects make sure you bring things back to the agenda. Going off on tangents can be great when brainstorming a subject but less helpful when attempting to get closure on a specific subject.

## **Control the Discussion**

Make sure you get every team member's input. It is often those who sit back who have some of the best ideas. Getting them involved can increase their own sense of engagement in the team. Value their input. If some are very vocal invite them to listen to what others have to say.

## **Work for Consensus**

Consensus is achieved when an idea receives majority support. This is given willingly when individuals have been involved in influencing the shape and eventual choice made through open discussion. Avoid decision by minority when those who are most vocal take control of the subject.

## **Summarise Decisions**

Clearly summarise what you believe to have been agreed. Communication in a group can sometimes break down when individuals have different interpretations of the same communication. Check for agreement not just verbally. Look at the body language of those who say yes verbally but perhaps communicate something entirely different with their eyes or posture.

### **Allocate Action**

Make sure that there is ownership of outputs agreed with deadlines.

### **Finish on Time**

Everyone is busy. Meetings that over run can eat into other activities that have been planned.

# DEALING WITH PEOPLE

As with nearly every subject we have looked at whilst developing you as a manager the subject of people comes up. It is important to recognise that team life (and management) is not always harmonious. If you find yourself in a situation where a meeting is being disrupted or hijacked for another purpose, then consider the following tips to help get it back on track.

**Blame Seeking:** When things go wrong it can be natural for some to seek out those who should be blamed. Establishing how things went wrong is more important than finding out who caused it. When there is a crisis or a setback the objective should be to establish what outcomes need to happen rather than identifying who is to blame. First and foremost have the group focus on what needs to be done.

**Conflict:** Conflict is inevitable in any organization. It does not always mean that people are coming to blows – there are often conflicting demands in a business for resources, people's time and expectations of performance. To deal with conflict make sure you embrace it rather than hide from it. Empathise with those whom seem to be at odds or have conflict based issues, agree what the actual problem is (people can get very emotional about the symptom and lose sight of the actual cause or the problem) and resolve the way forward. Focus on working together to remove the cause rather than dealing with the effects.

**Meeting Hijacking:** Sometimes others can come to a meeting with an different agenda to everyone else. If you find you have someone attempting to hijack your meeting – use your agenda to refocus on the purpose of the meeting. Schedule a few minutes at the end of the meeting to have a one to one about the subject. Alternatively position the subject in the AOB (Any Other Business) part of your meeting with the intent to hear the subject and gain consensus from the team if this is a shared subject or the minorities (sometimes just one person's) opinion.

# PURPOSEFUL PRACTICE

Getting good at chairing meetings doesn't happen in the training room. Now you have a model for success and the eight point plan to follow you need to get the opportunity to practice. Set a plan as to how you are going to run your first meeting with the team.

## Notes: